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October 24, 2019

This investigation involves allegations of official misconduct against Dennis Bonnen, the Texas Speaker of the House and as such is a public matter. Given the unique public nature of these allegations and subsequent investigation, I have chosen to issue this statement.

Texas law under Chapter 411 of the Government Code provides that for offenses against public administration Title 8 of the Texas Penal Code, or for certain Election Code offenses, committed by a state officer, such as a state representative, in connection with the powers and duties of their state office, that the Texas Rangers Public Integrity Unit, has authority to perform an investigation. Venue for any prosecution is the county of residence of the state officer which in the case of Speaker Dennis Bonnen is Brazoria County, Texas.

As the District Attorney with venue, the Government Code allows me to file a request to recuse myself and request that another prosecuting attorney from another county be appointed. That is not the right thing to do. District Attorneys are elected to make tough decisions. Passing this responsibility to another District Attorney would only cause undue delay for many months and another District Attorney would be in no better position to make a decision.

On August 12, 2019, the House General Investigating Committee requested the Texas Rangers Public Integrity Unit to conduct an investigation into the actions of Speaker Bonnen regarding a June 12, 2019 meeting with Speaker Bonnen, Michael Quinn Sullivan and Representative Dustin Burrows which occurred in Speaker Bonnen's Office at the Texas Capitol. The allegations regarding the June 12, 2019 meeting are that Speaker Bonnen offered conservative activist Michael Quinn Sullivan media credentials for Mr. Sullivan's organization in exchange for Mr. Sullivan's organization politically targeting a list of certain specific Republican House Members in the upcoming 2020 election.

This raised the issue of whether Speaker Bonnen committed certain offenses under Title 8 of the Texas Penal Code, such as Bribery or the misdemeanor charge of Solicitation of a Gift by a Public Servant.

As a follow up to the Legislative Committee request, on August 13, 2019 I made a prosecutorial request to the Texas Rangers Public Integrity Unit to conduct a criminal investigation as is allowed by the Texas Government Code. This request was made to ensure there would be an investigation conducted by the Public Integrity Unit which is a competent, premier, well respected and eminently qualified law enforcement investigative unit independent of Brazoria County. It was anticipated that the complete investigation would be forwarded to my office to determine whether or not criminal conduct occurred and whether or not prosecution is warranted based upon the evidence gathered.

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For over two months, the Public Integrity Unit has conducted a detailed, thorough and extensive investigation into the circumstances of the June 12, 2019 meeting and any alleged violations of Title 8 of the Texas Penal Code or any other offenses specified under Chapter 411 of the Texas Government Code. During this over two month time period, my First Assistant and I met on multiple occasions with investigators from the Public Integrity Unit and regularly communicated and coordinated with the Public Integrity Unit regarding this investigation. The investigation is complete.

The investigation has consisted of conducting numerous witness interviews, collection of supporting documentation, obtaining written and recorded statements and collecting physical evidence including the recording of the June 12, 2019 meeting.

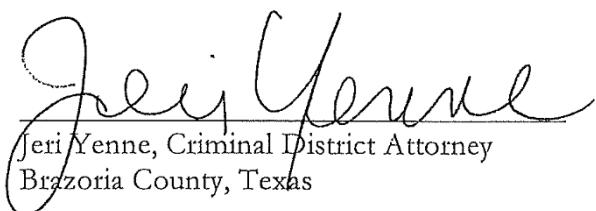
The accuracy of the June 12, 2019 recording has been scientifically authenticated. Additionally, Michael Quinn Sullivan has verified the accuracy of the recording and Speaker Bonnen as well as Representative Burrows have verified their voices on the recording and the statements made by them.

After reviewing the complete investigation of the Public Integrity Unit, the following are my conclusions:

The behavior and statements as reflected on the June 12, 2019 recording for which Speaker Bonnen has apologized are offensive, lacking in character and integrity, demeaning to other human beings including local government officials, cities and counties, and the Members of the Texas House of Representatives who placed their confidence in Speaker Bonnen and are entitled to his respect. As a Criminal District Attorney with civil jurisdiction, I am also the attorney for Brazoria County. Throughout this state, Texans live in cities and counties and are served by local public servants whose goal is to better the lives of their citizenry, communities and Texas, which benefits us all. The disparaging statements of Speaker Bonnen about local government officials, cities and counties and the statements of Representative Burrows indicating his hatred of cities and counties and his intent to harm local governments in the next Legislative Session are disappointing and disturbing.

As repugnant as Speaker Bonnen's actions and statements are, I do not believe there is sufficient evidence from the June 12, 2019 meeting to warrant a criminal prosecution of Speaker Bonnen for Bribery or Solicitation of a Gift by a Public Servant, therefore no criminal charges will be brought.

I want to express my appreciation to the Texas Rangers Public Integrity Unit for their tireless work on this investigation and for their professionalism. I anticipate upon this decision this investigation will now be delivered to the House General Investigating Committee for an appropriate review. A copy of this statement may also be found on the Brazoria County website www.brazoriacountytexas.gov under Departments, District Attorney Page.



Jeri Yenne
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